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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Cornell Shares in \$4.3 Million Award for Northeastern Integrated Pest Management Center; Continues Winning Partnership with Penn State**

GENEVA, NY: The USDA has awarded \$4.3 million to the Northeastern Integrated Pest Management Center (NE IPMC), a regional organization that promotes practical pest management solutions for urban and rural settings throughout the Northeast. Using a network of people, print, and electronic resources, the Center supports the development and adoption of integrated pest management (IPM), a science-based approach that fosters economic benefits while protecting the environment and human health.

"The Northeast presents diverse challenges when it comes to pest management," explains James VanKirk, the Cornell University senior extension associate responsible for the organization's daily operations. VanKirk co-directs the Center with John Ayers, a plant pathology professor at Penn State University, and is assisted by information specialist Liz Thomas and writer Liz Myers, both at Cornell.

"The region has a strong agricultural base and is also highly populated. We're looking for ways to minimize risks associated with pest management in rural and urban areas while producing healthy plants and food and optimizing farm profitability," said VanKirk.

The award covers the next four years of Center operations and represents a 44 percent annual increase over previous support. This increased support will enable the NE IPMC to create several new competitive funding programs that actively support projects addressing regional IPM priorities.

"The new funding allows us to build on our past successes and strengthens our ability to identify the real-world needs of growers and communities," explains VanKirk. "Once we've pinpointed the most pressing IPM needs, the Center and its many partner institutions can respond by supporting research and providing reliable, accessible information to address those concerns."

Another new component of the Center will be a biannual conference to serve as a gathering of stakeholders around the common interest of IPM. These regional IPM stakeholders include pest management users (such as farmers, nursery owners, park managers, and homeowners), consumer and environmental groups, government regulatory agencies, communities, researchers, and educators. The conference, planned for 2005 and 2007, will provide opportunities for new collaborations and will invigorate existing cooperative efforts among individuals, programs, and agencies.

NE IPMC is one of four regional IPM centers nationwide and covers the New England states, Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia. Established in 2000 as the Northeastern Pest Management Center, the organization is funded through the USDA's Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service and is jointly administered by Penn State and Cornell University.

The Center continues regional efforts that began in 1996, when state IPM leaders in the Northeast strengthened their commitment to collaborative efforts for IPM research and education.

"With the financial stresses facing land grants and other public institutions, it's especially important that we make efficient use of limited resources," says Michael Hoffmann, associate director of Cornell Cooperative Extension and the director of the New York State IPM Program. "The Center stands out as a model of regional cooperation. Its broad-based regional participatory leadership is one of its greatest strengths."

For more information about the Northeastern Integrated Pest Management Center, visit the web site at

<http://NEIPMC.org>.

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